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## **INA Freedom Fighters in Nagappattinam District**

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### **Abstract:**

*Nagappattinam is a holy town in Tamil Nadu. This town becomes the Headquarters of Nagappattinam District. This place came in to glory of its zenith, during the period of Medieval Cholas. It has been serving as an important port right from the early period of Medieval cholas and English East India Company. This port station was a commercial centre for Sri Lanka and the far East Countries. Buddhism spread to Sri Lanka through this port. A Sri Lankan King constructed a Buddhist structure of the time in Nagappattinam with the help of Chola Kingdom. That is the famous Chudamani Vihara in Nagappattinam. This town is in the coromandal coast. The Portuguese in the early times and the Dutch in the Later time settled in Nagappattinam from AD 1660 to AD 1781. The British East India Company conquered and captured this town Nagappattinam. It was serving as the capital of Thanjavur District from 1799 AD to 1845 AD, during the British Administration under Madras Presidency. It was continued to be a part of Thanjavur District even after the Indian Independence till 1991. Administrative reasons made the Tamil Nadu Government to bifurcate the big one. The newly created Nagappattinam District starts functioning separately from 1991. It covers an area 14.92 km<sup>2</sup>. Major occupation of this Nagappattinam District is Agriculture. But the town Nagappattinam is the centre for Fishing. Majority of the people are involved and employed in sea borne trading called Fishing. There are many different pilgrimage centers in Nagappattinam for different religious people. Such as, Velankanni is for Christians, Kayarohanaswami temple and Sundararajaperumal kovil for Hindus, Nagore Durgah for Muslims.*

**Keywords:** *Medieval Cholas, Trade and Commerce, Naval Expedition, Coromandel coast, Madras Presidency, Kanduri festival, Nagore Durgah. Buddhism, English East India Company.*

### **1. Introduction**

The word Nagappattinam is derived from the word 'Nagar' which is referring to people of Sri Lanka who have migrated from Sri Lanka and settled in this particular locality. 'Pattinam' means Town. When the chola administration prevailed in Tamil Nadu, Nagappattinam was called as 'Cholakula Vallippattinam'. Later it became 'Nagappattinam'. A great ancient Philosopher and Historian Ptolemy refers to Nagappattinam as 'Nikham'. Also he mentioned that, this was one of the most important trade centers of the ancient Tamil Country. Early Indian Writers and Portuguese writers referred this Nagappattinam as 'the city of coromandal'. Tamil Poets and Saints, namely Apppear and Thirugnanasambandar belong to 7<sup>th</sup> century refers to the city 'Nagai' in their Tamil literary work called Thevaram. They referred in their verses in Thevaram originally called 'Nagai' and the word 'Pattinam' was attached during the chola period.

#### *1.1. Sangam Age*

There are different period in the History of the world. Indian history is also having different periods. One such was Sangam Age. During this period the Tamil Literatures and other works were developed and flourished. As far as the town Nagappattinam is concern that there is no reference in sangam period. The Third Century BC to Third Century AD around Six Hundred years are considered as Sangam Period. There are many urn burials in and around the city reveals the history of the past. Some levels of human habitations were found in the city. The nearby port station to Nagappattinam port was Kaverypoompattinam. This was the present Poombuhar. It was believed that the city Kaverypoompattinam was burnt by Kannaki. It has been mentioned in 'Pattinapalai' one of the famous Sangam Literatures.

### 1.2. Seventh Century

The Sixth and Seventh centuries were believed to be the period of Religious revivalism in Hinduism. The Tamil Poets and Saints called Appair and Thirugnanasambandar belonged to the Seventh century used the name of this city Nagai in their work 'Thevaram'. They said that the town had forts and fortifications, buildings and a busy port.

An ancient Inscription in Kayarohanaswami temple in Nagappattinam gives the information about the construction of this temple, and the construction work had been initiated by a Pallava King by name Narasimha Pallava II during his reign of this Tamil country from AD 691 to AD 729. It gives information that a Buddhist Pagoda was also constructed with the support of a King of China during the Pallava Administration. A huge number of Buddhist and Chinese travelers visited this town Nagappattinam.

### 1.3. Mediaeval period

It is said that a Tamil Vaishnavite saint and poet Thirumangai Alwar of Ninth century had stolen the Golden Buddha statue and installed in Reanganathaswami temple at Srirangam, Trichirappalli, during the time of Raja Raja Chola. A Buddhist monastery called Chudamani Vihara was constructed by a Javanese ruler called Sri Vijaya Soolamanivarman with the patronage of Raja Raja Chola in 11<sup>th</sup> Century.

In the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, the Portuguese had trade with this town Nagappattinam, since it was a commercial centre begun in 1554 AD. They also started missionary programmes. In 1662, the Dutch made an agreement with King Vijaya Nayakkar of Thanjavur and the Portuguese handed over ten villages to the Dutch. The Names of the villages were Nagappattinam port, Puthur, Muttam, Anthanappettai, Poruvalancheri, Alingimangalam, Karureppankadu, Thiruthinamangalam, Manjakollai, Sangamangalam, and Nariyankudi. Under the welfare scheme the Dutch established a Hospital and for the gospel work they have constructed ten Christian churches and the chapels. In the part of Numismatic they mint coins in the name of Nagappattinam which was engraved in Tamil Language. The Dutch had an agreement with the Maratta kind Egoji of Thanjavur on 30, December 1676 AD. Based on this agreement, Nagappattinam and its surrounding villages were handed over to the Dutch. After that, they have changed their capital to Nagappattinam from Pulicat.

There was a naval expedition between English East India Company and the French fleets and fought for the town Nagappattinam in the year 1781. This was not the first battle, but the first battle took place in 1758 as part of the Seven Years War. The second battle took place in 1782 as part of the American War of Independence. After this naval expedition this town was taken by the British from the Dutch by a peace agreement in 1781. Say about 277 villages including Nagore came into the hands of English East India Company and they made it as their Headquarters. Nagore was the capital of English East India Company for some years. Later, both Nagappattinam and Nagore were together incorporated as a single municipality in 1866, before that Nagappattinam was the headquarters of Thanjavur district from 1799 to 1845. The port Nagappattinam stated its decline because of the new emergence of Tranquebar and Tuticorin Ports.

### 1.4. Establishment of New District

The newly created Nagappattinam district has been bifurcated from the Thanjavur district with the following six taluks. They are Sirkazih, Tharangambadi, Mayiladuthurai, Valangaiman, Vedaranniyam and Nagappattinam. The people of this new district speak Tamil and Telugu languages.

### 1.5. Festivals

People of this district are celebrating the following festivals. They are Navarathiri, Aadi Pooram, Aavani Moolam, Karthigai Deepam, Kandha Sashti, Thula Utsav, Vaikasi Brahmotsavam, Valli Kalyanam, Thirukarthigai, Ahyayana Utsav, Chithirai Thiruvizha, Floating festival, Mahasivarathiri, Panguni Uthiram, Theerthavari festival for 18 days, Sukla Saphthami day, Thiruvathirai, Thaipooam, Pongal, Deepavali, Christmas, Kanduri festival for 14 days, Velankanni festival for 8 days etc.,

### 1.6. Hindu Temples

The festival is also seen as a sacred exchange between Hindus and Muslims expressing solidarity of mixed faith in the region. It is believed that 60 percent of the shrines were built by Hindus. There are three other prominent mosques. One is near Nagai Pudhur Road, Second one is near the new bus stand, and the third one is at Moolakadai Street.

Koyarohanaswamy Temple was a Shiva Temple. It has been in existence from 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Tamil Saints Appair, Campantar and Sundarar revered the verses of Thevaram during 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century. It was one of the seven temples of the Thyagraja cult, classified as Saptha Vidangam, where the presiding deity Thyagaraja is believed to portray different dance styles. The temple is also known for the shrine of Neelayadakshi, the consort of Kayarohanaswami. It is one of the oldest temples in the town.

Soundararajaperumal Temple is a Hindu temple in the town dedicated to Vishnu. It is one of the Divya Desams, the 108 temples of Vishnu revered in Nalayira Divya Prabandham by Thirumangai Azhwar, one of the 12 poet saints called Azhwars belonging to the 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century. Nagappattinam is base to some of the prominent Hindu temples like Sikkal Singaravelan Temple at Sikkal, Vedaranyeswarar temple at Vedaranyam, Ettududi Murugan temple and Koothanur Maha Saraswathi temple are situated around Nagappattinam.

### 1.7. Christian Churches

A Roman Catholic Church built during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Pilgrimage to the basilica is common during September when people of many faiths, especially Hindus, Muslims and Christians of all denominations visit the basilica. That is Velankanni church is a pilgrimage

centre located 10 km (6.2 mi) from Nagapattinam. The town has four prominent churches. They are the Lourdu Madha (Sindhathurai Madha) Church, the Madharasi Madha Church, T.E.L.C. Church and the Protestant Church.

### *1.8. Nagoor Durgha*

In memory and honour of the saint Hajrath Shahul Hameed a minaret was constructed in 16<sup>th</sup> century at Nagoor which became the major Pilgrimage centre for the Muslims. A 14 day Kanduri festival is celebrated by all the people is setting an example for the religious tolerance.

### *1.9. Local Self Administration*

Nagapattinam was declared as a municipality in 1866 during British times. It was promoted to a second grade municipality in 1986 and selection grade in 1998. The municipality has 36 wards and there are 36 elected councilors to look after the needs of the people in each of those wards. All the departments are under the control of a Municipal Commissioner. He is the supreme executive head. The legislative powers are vested in a body of 36 members. The legislative body is headed by an elected chairperson, assisted by a deputy chairperson. The town became the district headquarters when the Nagapattinam district was created as a separate district.

### *1.10. Police Department*

Nagapattinam subdivision of Police Department of the Tamil Nadu Police headed by a Deputy Superintendent is maintaining the Law and order in the town. There are three police stations in the town, one of them being an all-women police station.

### *1.11. Best Time to Visit*

The best time of the year to visit Nagapattinam is during October to March when the climatic conditions are at its best. However, the place receives tourists almost all year round as the months of April and May are good for pilgrimage and during the monsoons in June to September the place looks remarkably fresh and beautiful

## **2. Tranquebar and Porayar**

Tranquebar and Porayar, the places of the Historical Importance, are being developed in a gradual manner from time to time. During the time of British invasion, the Danish Government appointed about 30 governors to look after their settlements from 1629 to 1845 A.D. The Danish people were not interested in empire building like the British in Madras and the French in Pondicherry. In 1845 they sold it to the British for 12.5 lakhs of rupees. From 1847 A.D., to 1860 A.D., it was the head-quarters of the Tanjore District. The District Courts were functioning up to 1880 in Tranquebar. The Tranquebar village is a well planned one. It has parallel roads. The streets are bearing the old names like King Street, Queen Street and Admiral Street. Tranquebar was enclosed by fortifications on all sides. The people called this place the Queen of Coramandel Coast.

## **3. Freedom Fighters in Tranquebar and Porayar**

A Veteran freedom fighter T. A. Muthuvelu, aged 100 years. He was fondly called 'Tyagi' by the people, passed away at Porayar in Nagapattinam district on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2009. The end came after a brief illness. He is lived with his wife, two sons and as many daughters. He was Born in 1909 at Porayar. Muthuvelu plunged into the freedom struggle during his boyhood and participated in several struggles. He was a follower of Gandhiji, Muthuvelu led a simple life all these years. On the Independence Day and Gandhi Jayanthi day every year, Muthuvelu used to go round the streets of Porayar town in a procession carrying a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi. After the Independence, Muthuvelu became the agent for various Tamil and English dailies, including 'The New Indian Express' and 'Dinamani' and several periodicals. He did the job more as a matter of service than business. He used to carry the dailies on his head and deliver them at the doorstep of subscribers. He would say, "I started my career as a news agent and want to die as one." He worked as a news agent for over five decades. Muthuvelu refused to accept the Government pension for freedom fighters initially. A few years ago, his close associates persuaded him to accept it. A large number of people paid their last respects to the mortal remains of Muthuvelu.

The total number of freedom fighters in Tamil Nadu is 16,269. Out of which, 4,263 belong to INA. Among this 4,263 INA freedom fighters, 25 are in Tranquebar and Porayar area. Tranquebar and Porayar are the two important historical places in this district. Tranquebar and Porayar are the twin villages. Freedom fighters of these two important historical places played a vital role in the Freedom Movement of India.

They are :

1. Kumarandi Arjunan Nadar, 2. Duraisamy Aburvasamy, 3. Nataraja Padayachi Thangavelu, 4. Raghavanathar Naid Raghavan, 5. Saravana Padayachi Subbiah, 6. Nataraja Periyasamy Padayachi, 7. Arunachalam Kandasamy Padayachi, 8. Sinnadurai Uthirapathy Padayachi, 9. Subramanian Govindaraj Padayachi, 10. Gopalsamy Govindaraj, 11. Duraisamy Arumugam, 12. Kandasamy Govindaraju, 13. Pavadai Padayachi Muthukumarasamy, 14. Ponnusamy Muthuvelu, 15. Chellappan Nagappan, 16. Muthusamy Narayanasamy, 17. Natesa Muthaliar Panchavarnam, 18. Subbiah Rajendran, 19. Krishna Mudaliar Raju, 20. Natesan Ramanujam, 21. Subramaniya Mudaliar Ramalingam, 22. Rathinasamy, 23. Kandasamy Padayachi Swaminathan, 24. T.M. Natarajan, and 25. Nagalinga Mudaliar Sivaperumal Mudaliar.

### 3.1. Kumarandi Arjunan Nadar (1909)

Kumarandi Arjunan Nadar was residing at 6, Maideen Maraikyar street, Porayar, Tranquebar T.K., Nagapattinam District. He was a cigar merchant. He studied 10<sup>th</sup> standard in Thavasimuthu Nadar Higher Secondary School, Porayar. He has been a member of the defunct Indian National Army constituted by Netaji Subash Chandra Bose in the Far East. He was arrested by the British forces at Singapore and imprisoned in Singapore Bidadari Camp Jail (From 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945 to the end of February 1946) for 6 months. His co-prisoner was Kathan Ambalam Somasundaram, Thuvarankurichi Post, Pattukottai Taluk, Thanjavur District. He was getting INA pension of Rs. 500/- from the Central Government vide Ministry of Home Affairs Order No. 29/433/74 FF INA dated 3,2,77. His regiment number was 0265. He joined in INA in 1943 as a Recruiting Officer of Indian Independent League Syonam Branch, Singapore. He served in INA in this capacities until his arrest in 1945.

### 3.2. R. Veeraraghavan Naidu

Raghavanathar Naid Raghavan is also called R. Veeraraghavan Naidu an Indian National Army freedom fighter, veteran, aged 98 years, passed away at his native village of Thillaiyadi in Nagappattinam district on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012. He was not well during his last days. Tarangambadi Tahsildar Azhagirisamy placed a wreath on the body of the veteran freedom fighter on behalf of the Government. A large number of people of the village paid their last respects to the INA veteran. Veeraraghavan Naidu joined the INA and rose to become a close aid of the founder Netaji Subash Chandra Bose. Veeraraghavan served in INA in Singapore and Myanmar. After Bose's death, Veeraraghavan Naidu returned to his native village. Naidu is survived by his wife Vimala aged 75 years. He was coming from a respectable Naidu family of Thillaiyadi. He studied 7<sup>th</sup> standard in Ayyasamy Senthamil Vidhyasala, Thillaiyadi. He joined Indian National Army in 1942 at Singapore. He was working in the press section as press foreman. He was absorbed into the Field propaganda unit and taken to Burma Front. He was trained at Baktan camp and was posted at Rangoon city. He was incharge of producing front line code words, books, all INA secret papers etc., he was working as Foreman Printing Lewis street, Mess. When Rangoon city became a open city, he was arrested at Lewis street Mess at Rangoon and kept as a detenu at the Rangoon Central Jail, Burma a period from 15.5.1945 to 3.3.1946.

## 4. Conclusion

All the INA Members are considered as Militant Nationalist and Extremists. They followed revolutionary methods to get independence. They all should be honoured in a befitting manner. Their life history and the services rendered to the society must be brought out to the light.

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